CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 6 March 1990, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Emeka Ayo Azikiwe (Nigeria)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 540th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

In accordance with the programme of work, the Conference will start today its consideration of agenda item 5, "Prevention of an arms race in outer space". However, in conformity with rule 30 of its rules of procedure, any member wishing to do so may raise any subject relevant to the work of the Conference.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Mexico and Bulgaria. I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico, Ambassador Marin Bosch.

Mr. MARIN BOSCH (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): The delegation of Mexico would like to make a few comments on item 5 on our agenda, "Prevention of an arms race in outer space", and share with the other delegations some of our general considerations on the work and the future of the Conference. But before I turn to that, Mr. President, may I express our great pleasure at seeing you presiding over our work and pledge to you the fullest co-operation of our delegation? Through the presence of its Minister for Foreign Affairs last week, Nigeria underlined the importance it has always attached to this forum for negotiating disarmament agreements. I should also like to thank Ambassador Wagenmakers of the Netherlands for his efforts and the efforts of his delegation during the month of February.

For centuries the conquest of space was but a dream cropping up sporadically in theoretical debates among scientists or in the tales of writers. In the last few decades that dream has turned into reality and today is an enterprise, a vast enterprise which, encouraged by man's pioneering and adventurous spirit, offers us many opportunities for international co-operation. However, we should recognize that 30 years after the beginning of the space era, and despite our best intentions, the United Nations has not yet succeeded in forging a definite and defining role for itself in this sphere. In contrast to the chapters relating to decolonization and international economic co-operation contemplated in the Charter of the Organization itself, the United Nations has had to improvise in the area of outer space, as indeed it has had to fill the gap in the Charter with regard to nuclear weapons. And it is to this very task of improvization that the General Assembly has had to grapple with many a difficulty, including sometimes opposing interpretations and intentions.

When and why did these difficulties arise? The question has no easy answer. Are we dealing with a manufacturing defect, an original flaw, or is it just a stumbling-block - a mere accident? Let us look at how the matter stood in 1957. In the autumn of that year both super-Powers were in a position to launch a test satellite. On 4 October the Soviet Union was the first to do so. That event surprised many and served as a stimulus to others. The result was the inclusion of an item entitled "Question of the peaceful use of outer space" in the agenda of the thirteenth session of the General Assembly, held in 1958. On completing its consideration of that item, the General Assembly adopted resolution 1348 (XIII), thus establishing an ad hoc Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) made up of 18 nations and entrusted with reporting on the activities and resources of the

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United Nations, of its specialized agencies and of other international organizations relating to this matter, the organizational arrangements to facilitate international co-operation in this field within the framework of the United Nations and the nature of legal problems which might arise in the carrying out of programmes to explore of outer space. The resolution was adopted by 53 votes to 9, with 19 abstentions. The opposition came from the countries of Eastern Europe, for two reasons: first, the Committee's mandate passed over in silence the question of the militarization of outer space, and secondly, the Committee's composition was unbalanced as it only included three countries from the Socialist group.

The foregoing was set out in detail on 13 December 1958 by Ambassador A.A. Sobolev of the Soviet Union, who added that his Government would not participate in the work of the Committee because its unbalanced composition had been imposed by a resolution adopted by an "automatic majority". In turn the United States Ambassador, Henry Cabot Lodge, said:

> "I heard Mr. Sobolev this evening talk about automatic majorities. One of the things that has impressed me here - and, I think, has impressed quite a number of delegations - is the automatic minority which we see performing fairly regularly. I think that if the day ever comes when the Soviet Union gets a majority in this body - and I hope it will come, because it will mean that the Soviet Union has changed its policy and its attitude - he will not call it an automatic majority. It is automatic when the other fellow gets it."

The following year, when agreement had been reached on a membership which was more acceptable to the countries of the Socialist group, resolution 1472 (XIV) was adopted without a vote. This resolution established COPUOS. On that occasion the General Assembly also decided to convene a first international scientific conference for the exchange of experience in the peaceful uses of outer space. These then are the two pillars on which the work of the United Nations in this field is based: the international conferences, of which UNISPACE 82 was the last, and the annual meetings of COPUOS and its two sub-committees. Though it can be said that in 1959, in establishing COPUOS, the General Assembly was able to overcome the problems deriving from the cold war, the history of recent decades shows us that the exploration and use of outer space, far from turning into a sphere of international co-operation for peaceful purposes, has become yet another arena for confrontation and competition between the two main military Powers.

Military activities in outer space have been the source of growing concern on the part of the international community. Back in 1957, Canada, the United States, France and the United Kingdom presented a proposal for the creation of a technical committee to study the features of an inspection system designed to assure that the launching of objects through outer space would be exclusively for peaceful and scientific purposes. The Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, held in Vienna in August 1982, formulated a set of recommendations designed to further international co-operation in the exploration and use of outer space for exclusively peaceful purposes. As a result of that Conference the General Assembly adopted resolution 37/90, in which, "gravely concerned the

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extension of an arms race into outer space", it invited "all Member States, in particular those with major space capabilities to contribute actively to the goal of preventing an arms race in outer space, as an essential condition for the promotion of international co-operation in the exploration and uses of outer space for peaceful purposes".

The day before, on 9 December 1982, in its resolution 37/83, the General Assembly had requested this Conference - which was still called a Committee - "to consider as a matter of priority the question of preventing an arms race in outer space" and "to establish an ad hoc working group on the subject at the beginning of its session in 1983, with a view to undertaking negotiations for the conclusion of an agreement or agreements, as appropriate, to prevent an arms race in all its aspect in outer space".

The following year, in its resolution 38/80, the General Assembly called upon "all States, in particular those with major space capabilities, to undertake prompt negotiations, under the aupices of the United Nations, with a view to reaching agreement or agreements designed to halt the militarization of outer space and prevent an arms race in outer space, thus contributing to the achievement of the internationally accepted goal of ensuring the utilization of outer space exclusively for peaceful purposes". In that same resolution it requested COPUOS "to consider, as a matter of priority, the questions relating to the militarization of outer space, taking into account that, in General Assembly resolution 37/83 of 9 December 1982, the Committee on Disarmament was requested to consider as a matter of priority the question of preventing an arms race in outer space, and also taking into account the need to co-ordinate the efforts of COPUOS and the Committee on Disarmament".

Since then, year in, year out, the Assembly has reiterated that this Conference, "as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, has the primary role in the negotiation of a multilateral agreement or agreements, as appropriate on the prevention of an arms race in outer space".

In August 1985 the Group of Six once again urged the United States and the Soviet Union to put an end to the militarization of outer space. At that time - about six or seven years ago - we were being told that COPUOS was not the appropriate forum to consider measures designed to prevent the growing militarization of outer space. The appropriate forum to negotiate agreements, we were told, was this Conference. Already at that time, it was estimated that three of every four of the thousands of satellites launched into outer space had a military use - to improve the effectiveness of armies and their weapons systems, for navigation, communications, meteorology and geodesy, right up in what is called reconnaissance, in other words, the gathering of data on possible military targets. Meanwhile, anti-satellite weapons had already been tested, and thought began to be given to the possibility of establishing an anti-ballistic-missile system in space.

Since then, and as a result of the Strategic Defense Initiative, commonly known as "Star Wars", there has been an increase in the number of contracts for research projects, on which it is calculated that astronomical sums have already been spent. Hence it is natural that hundreds of companies, laboratories and private institutes have evinced growing interest in participating in one way or another in the various projects deriving from

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"Star Wars". It is obvious that a vast network of vested interests is taking shape which, as part of the United States military-industrial complex, will perform the task of promoting the programme for their own benefit. There is no doubt that something similar is happening in the Soviet Union.

Despite the repeated appeals of the international community, this Conference has not been able to tackle this priority matter successfully. True, year in, year out we repeat the ritual of establishing an ad hoc committee to consider the item, but because of the opposition of one delegation, this mandate is not a negotiating mandate. The ritual is being repeated at the moment.

This brings us to the second point of this statement. After 12 years of absence we have come back to this forum. We left in 1978, shortly after the General Assembly introduced certain adjustments into its methods of work and approved its enlargement. At that time we worked under the auspices of the unusual institution of a co-chairmanship. There were 26 members, although one of the seats was always empty. In the 1970s we had to justify our existence, and the ENMOD Convention was drawn up. The international community did not pay much attention to it. Then came the 1978 adjustments and the enlargement, and today we are the multilateral negotiating forum by antonomasia.

The past of our Conference contains some important chapters and many missed opportunities. Its present appears rather promising owing to the subject of chemical weapons, but its medium-term future is frankly uncertain. A couple of decades ago, Mrs. Alva Myrdal periodically invited us to think collectively about the course of our work. She described that exercise as a "mapping expedition". We might also think of the terms used by architects before they begun the construction of a building. They talk of a "critical path". Call it what you will, we must devote some thought to this matter. Unlike architects, we would be following our critical path after the building - that is, the Conference - had already been constructed. But on the other hand, there is much accumulated experience and, as we have observed, much good will among the delegates present here, who, if I may say so, form a sort of guild of craftsmen in the field of disarmament. So we must try and see the horizon more clearly. And we must begin by working for the credibility of this Conference. Where do we see here a reflection of the sense of urgency which usually appears in the resolutions of the General Assembly and informs the work and opinions of many non-governmental organizations? A second question is: what is going to happen in this room once the convention on chemical weapons has been concluded? Are we going to plunge again into the sterile pantomime of past eras? Will we then seek some item of little value to the international community simply in order to "produce something" and thereby make a good impression on the General Assembly? In a word, is there life after the CW convention?

Moreover, if we remain today attached to the system of antagonistic military alliances or, even more dangerously, if we try to consolidate and institutionalize military advantages obtained unilaterally, we will achieve little in this Conference. Here we continue to base our actions on obsolete politico-military models. One of the military alliances is undergoing profound changes. The countries of Eastern Europe have announced that they

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that they will make unilateral cuts in their military budgets, their armies and their weapons, as well as their intention to reach agreement on the withdrawal of foreign troops from their territories. Such unilateral or negotiated steps constitute concrete and effective disarmament measures. The other alliance - whose raison d'être is disappearing - will doubtless have to take similar steps. What will be the purpose of maintaining an established military alliance to confront an alleged threat which has vanished? Hence, we must give thought to the new geopolitical reality which is in gestation. It is obvious that the speed of the changes in Europe has surprised even the most experienced political observers. The political and military adjustments deriving from these changes have already begun to appear, and they are occurring with unusual naturalness. Governments are acting in accordance with the will of their own peoples, without consulting anyone and without asking permission to do so. And what are we to say of the non-aligned or neutral countries? Non-aligned and neutral vis-à-vis whom?

This Conference was created and continues to work under a system deriving from the military treaties of the post-war era. This system will soon be history. When the then Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament began its work, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union stated on 15 March 1962:

> "The Eighteen-Nation Committee can be said to be a sort of cross-section of the present-day world. All three main groups of States are represented here: the socialist countries, the States belonging to the military blocs of the Western Powers, and the neutralist countries. The Committee also incorporates the interests of the various ... regions of the world.
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> "Never before has there been a negotiating body for disarmament that was so fitted for the solution of the problem confronting it. The Committee is broad enough to be representative in the full sense of the word. At the same time it is narrow enough to act efficiently without getting stuck in the quagmire of endless discussions in which the vital cause of disarmament would be bogged down" (ENDC/PV.2).

On the same day the Secretary of State of the United States said:

> "All of us will agree, I am sure, that this Conference faces one of the most perplexing and urgent tasks on the agenda of man. In this endeavour we welcome our association with representatives from countries which have not previously been intimately involved with earlier negotiations on disarmament. The dreary history of such negotiations shows that we need their help and fresh points of view. The presence of these delegations reminds us too that arms races are not the exclusive concern of the great Powers. Countries situated in every region of the world are confronted with their own conflicts and their tensions, and some are engaged in competition. We are not here dealing solely with a single struggle in which a few large States are engaged, with the rest of the world as spectators. Every State has a contribution to make in establishing the conditions for general disarmament in its own way" (ENDC/PV.2).

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Although in 1978 it was agreed to abandon the institution of the co-chairmanship, we continue to be organized on the basis of the initial asymmetry: an identical number of participants from both groupings or military blocs, and as many from the non-aligned or neutral countries. But I repeat that this system is on its way out, and consequently we must design a new one. Hence the question of the expansion of the membership of the Conference is difficult to consider now in accordance with what was agreed here - in other words, as paragraphs 14 and 15 of the 1989 report (CD/956) put it, "so as to maintain balance in the membership of the Conference". Which balance? That of 1962 or another balance based on very different criteria?

We are witnesses to major geopolitical changes. We have seen the beginning of a process, the end of which we do not know. Its new politico-military order has not yet been forged. Its licence is being negotiated. Consequently a degree of caution is to be recommended when we examine the expansion of the membership of the Conference.

If we have spoken somewhat at length on this occasion, it is to stress the importance we attach to these questions. Our ideas, which we hope will be considered useful, have been formulated in a constructive spirit and with the respectful scepticism which our deliberations merit.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Bulgaria, Ambassador Kostov.

Mr. KOSTOV (Bulgaria): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to warmly congratulate you on taking up the presidency of the Conference for the month of March, and to assure you that you may rely on me and my delegation for all the support you may need in discharging your responsibilities. To that I would like to add a word of gratitude and admiration to Ambassador Hendrik Wagenmakers of the Netherlands for the competent and able manner in which he directed our work in February.

As I am speaking for the first time this year, I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome my colleagues, the recently appointed Ambassadors Roberto García Moritán of Argentina, Gerald Shannon of Canada, Hou Zhitong of China, José Pérez Novoa of Cuba, Andrea Negrotto Cambiaso of Italy, Mitsuro Donowaki of Japan, Thomas Ogada of Kenya, Miguel Marín Bosch of Mexico, Stephen Ledogar of the United States of America and Horacio Arteaga of Venezuela. Wishing them all every success during their stay in Geneva, I would like to express my delegation's desire to maintain with them the close professional and personal relations we had with their predecessors.

This year's session of the Conference on Disarmament is being held at a moment in history when the prospects of forming a new, democratic and humane type of international relations free of fears, mutual threats and mistrust are brighter than ever. Without making a detailed account of past events, which has been done quite objectively by many speakers before me in this hall, I would like simply to share what appears to be a common feeling, that we have entered a post-confrontational era characterized by a common desire to build

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up a peaceful world based on mutual confidence and co-operation rather than on weapons. Our fervent hope is that a further productive dialogue between States in the search for equitable solutions to outstanding international problems will make this process an irreversible one.

It is quite obvious that the business-like atmosphere in the relations between the USSR and the United States, their growing interaction in the resolution of regional conflicts, the broadened dialogue between them on global international problems and the tangible progress in bilateral disarmament have had a decisive impact on these processes and should continue to have such an impact in the future. In this connection, we expect the forthcoming Soviet-American summit to consolidate the positive trends in international life and to further relieve the nuclear burden hanging over mankind.

I hope it will not be considered irrelevant if I dwell for a while on European affairs. But what we are now witnessing in Europe, if I may use the words of my Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Dimitrov, is the rapid disintegration of the post-war international order based on bipolarity and division and on ideological, political and military confrontation. Needless to say, this process is extending its significance far beyond the European continent. The recent developments in Europe are marked to a large extent by the drive for radical changes in political and economic life in the East European countries. Since 10 November last year Bulgaria has resolutely embarked on the road towards the creation of a democratic, multi-party political system and a pluralist, socially oriented market economy. Free and competitive parliamentary elections are to be held in the coming months. Meanwhile, a wholly representative round table has been set up to discuss the most pressing problems.

Bulgaria's orientations in foreign policy are also being redefined in the light of the rapid changes in the world and our national interests. Having committed us as integral part of Europe, we are determined to actively participate with all European nations in the formulation of new political approaches and the establishment of an effective security system in Europe, together with growing all-European integration in the economic, humanitarian and other areas. Consequently, we welcome the idea of having a 35-nation summit meeting in the autumn of this year and believe that preparatory work in that and therein great without delay. Bulgaria is of the opinion that at the meeting in Vienna between the Warsaw Treaty Organization and NATO member States could be signed, and further confidence-building and security-building measures for the whole of Europe could be defined. We would also support further serious talks on military doctrines. The seminar held in Vienna was a useful first step in this direction.

In setting out its position on the above-mentioned matters, Bulgaria cannot fail to take into consideration existing realities in the region in which it belongs, and will evidently seek effective international guarantees for its security. Security, as we see it, is not a zero-sum game in which one side's gain is the other's loss. Anything that gives one side a destabilizing advantage risks increasing tension. That is why we will oppose any solution

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that leads to unequal security for a given region or for individual States. This is especially valid for the southern corner of Europe, where pronounced military assymetries exist even now. Mutually acceptable solutions are needed not only for Central Europe but for the other regions as well.

Allow me to turn now to our concrete work in the Conference on Disarmament. I will not be the first to note with regret the difficulties our Conference has in adjusting to the pace of changes in the world. The state of affairs in multilateral disarmament is in sharp contrast with the overall tendency of growing multilateralization of international life. If this representative negotiating body continues its l'art pour l'art activities, failing to produce net results, it will become more and more difficult to rationally explain its raison d'ëtre to the public outside this hall.

The CW convention is in the immediate future the only possible multilateral agreement in a major area of disarmament. My delegation welcomes the prompt re-establishment of the Ad hoc Committee with a mandate based on a reasonable compromise, and is convinced that under the leadership of Ambassador Hyltenius of Sweden we shall be able to make considerable headway so as to come close to the conclusion of the convention.

Without at this stage going into the substance, I shall limit myself to two more general observations. The first concerns the need to conclude the convention at the earliest date in accordance with the recommendations of the Final Declaration of the Paris Conference and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly. This would not only ensure the elimination of this abhorrent type of weapon, which is one of the major disarmament tasks, but would also have a great psychological effect as a proof of the ability of the international community to achieve measures of real disarmament. It would also add to the credibility of the Conference itself which has been seriously undermined in the past decade. From the political and organizational point of view alike, the moment is especially propitious for the mobilization of efforts aimed at the conclusion of the convention. There is a prevailing view that no big political, technical or procedural obstacles stand in the way of the negotiations; there is a mass of concrete proposals and ideas on outstanding questions; there is the new impetus provided by the recent Soviet-American joint statement. Finally, we have the collective wisdom and the dedication of the members of this body. As Ambassador Azambuja of Brazil observed, "we have assembled virtually all the necessary building-blocks" to complete our task.

My second observation concerns the need to ensure the universal character of the future convention and its rapid implementation after it is signed. We are of the opinion that some regional co-operative measures and activities before the conclusion of the convention may prove quite useful in this respect, as in view of the very nature of chemical weapons the most sensitive security concerns are likely to involve neighbouring States or States belonging to a given geographical region. These preliminary actions I am referring to might include declarations on possession or non-possession of chemical weapons, individual or joint political declarations of the States of a region indicating a resolve to become original parties to the convention, mutual trial inspections on a bilateral or broader regional basis, etc.

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The "nuclear items" still have priority for us. Consequently, we cannot be satisfied with their status in the CD. The international community at large is now practically excluded from participation in solving the problems of nuclear disarmament. The special responsibility of the Soviet Union and the United States in this field does not remove the responsibility of the other nuclear-weapon States, nor does it relieve the non-nuclear-weapon States of their right and obligation to actively participate in resolving the problems of nuclear disarmament. The CD should therefore play the role of a main forum in this field, providing a clear and realistic perspective as to the stages of nuclear disarmament, the place and role of both nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon States in the course of its implementation, and the relationship between bilateral and multilateral negotiations, including principles and arrangements for promptly informing the members of this Conference on the state of the Soviet-American negotiations and any future negotiations with the participation of all nuclear-weapon States.

Another very important task is the elaboration of arrangements on, and mechanisms for, the prevention of the outbreak of a nuclear conflict. The main aspects of the problem have been identified, but unfortunately no practical work on agenda item 3 has been done yet. My delegation has supported the draft mandate suggested by the Group of 21 in document CD/515/Rev.1, considering it both flexible and comprehensive enough to allow substantive work on this agenda item. At the same time, we have expressed our readiness to accept other procedural forms to deal with the matter. The time has come, in our opinion, to have a fresh look at this agenda item taking into account today's security environment, the changing accents and priorities in disarmament and, not least, the practical possibilities.

The prevention of nuclear war requires the adoption of a wide range of various measures which could hardly be incorporated in one single agreement. Bulgaria continues to favour radical and comprehensive solutions such as, for instance, the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons. Adherence to such approaches should not, however, close the door to the discussion of some partial measures related, for example, to confidence-building, increasing transparency and predictability in the military sphere and diminishing the risk of the outbreak of war, which could have good chances of success in the Conference. The idea of setting up a multilateral nuclear risk reduction centre might prove quite relevant in this connection.

In other words, it seems useful to select some priority practical measures from the general complex of issues related to the prevention of nuclear war, and to examine the procedural possibilities and ways of holding negotiations on them in the framework of item 3 of our agenda. In this context, my delegation fully supports the Swedish proposal that we should start negotiations under this item on a multilateral agreement on the prevention of incidents on and over the high seas.

Our basic approach to the problem of negative security assurances has been elaborated upon in detail on many occasions. Today I would like to stress some points before the Ad hoc Committee embarks again on discussing this issue. In the light of the forthcoming fourth review conference of the NPT it becomes a matter of urgency for the Conference on Disarmament to address constructively the problem of how it should best proceed in its

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endeavour to help develop further what is now available as regards guarantees for the security of the non-nuclear-weapon States. My delegation takes good note of the new Nigerian proposal contained in document CD/967, and will examine it carefully. We support efforts to solve the problem by the most effective and credible means of an international instrument of a legally binding character with the participation of both nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. Such a multilateral instrument will, in our opinion, have a number of advantages over unilateral declarations. However, in view of the difficulties in building up a consensus on an early solution along these lines, we have also expressed our wish to consider other parallel solutions, including possible interim measures, which could be considered as steps conducive to the achievement of our final objective.

In conclusion I shall briefly touch upon the question of the nuclear test ban. Everything on this matter seems to have been said. Let me, however, stress once more the conviction that the halting and total prohibition of nuclear testing is the principal means of curbing the nuclear arms race, especially in the context of an initiated process of real nuclear disarmament. Let us hope that during this part of the session the Conference on Disarmament will finally assume its responsibility in this sphere, and I wish Ambassador Donowaki of Japan early success in this regard.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Bulgaria for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to me. That concludes my list of speakers today. Does any other member wish to take the floor?

I should like now to inform you that, at our next plenary meeting on Thursday, 8 March, I shall put before the Conference for adoption an additional request from a non-member, in this case Portugal, to participate in the work of the Conference and its subsidiary bodies. I wish also to announce that at the same plenary meeting on Thursday, we will be honoured by a visit from the participants in the Women's Meeting for International Women's Day, which is opening today in the Palais des Nations. On the occasion of that visit, which as you know takes place every year on International Women's Day, we shall receive a message from that Meeting which the Secretary-General of the Conference will read out for your information. We already have one speaker for Thursday - the representative of Sweden - and I hope that other representatives will follow his example, so that our guests may have much food for thought after their visit.

I have no other business for today. I now intend to adjourn this plenary meeting. The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday, 8 March, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.